

Green Sense 12/22/13

Reducing Resolutions

It is a tradition to make New Year Resolutions—some we stick to, some fall by the wayside. Each year this column offers some suggestions for energy saving/climate protecting New Year's resolutions and we hope that some of these are sticking. These are a variety of easy actions to consider. If you have already taken these actions, we applaud!

The good news is that the more environmentally friendly lifestyle, or purchase of items that fall under the green blanket, often means savings for you. It may just be a change in behavior, a different type of item than you would normally buy, or a change in how you discard used items. This year it could mean putting a concerted effort into following Reading's recycling program.

Some effective actions to green your lifestyle in 2014:

- 1. Follow the Reduce-Reuse-Recycle mantra: Reduce trash by Reducing what you buy (Think: Do you really need that tempting product? It's better to reduce than to purchase!); Reuse what you can for example, use a reusable water bottle and tap water rather than disposable bottles of water, reuse plastic containers for storage, give gently-used clothes and furniture to charitable organizations, resale shops, or have a swap party; Recycle everything you can Reading has an extensive mandatory recycling program, details can be found on the Town's website.
- 2. Reduce Your Energy Use: Get the family to turn things off when not in use. Don't let the TV run as background noise, turn it off. Look for phantom energy users and eliminate them: Put TVs, computers, game consoles, etc. and related accessories on smart power strips, which turn off everything at once. Unplug all electronics chargers once charging is complete. Shut off lights when leaving a room, even if you plan to return.
- 3. One of the most effective things you can do to help the environment is change your incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescents (CFL) or light-emitting diodes (LED). CFLs last longer and use less than 1/3 of the energy of an incandescent bulb. Better yet, LEDs use up to 90% less energy and are nearly indestructible. At this time of year, you may be able to find strings of LED holiday lights on clearance, to use next holiday season. So resolve to save on lighting energy in the New Year.
- 4. Another good choice is ENERGYSTAR: The ENERGYSTAR label assures you that the product meets standards for high energy efficiency. Resolve to buy only

ENERGYSTAR certified electronics and appliances. And, take advantage of RMLD's and Reading's rebate programs for energy/water-efficient purchases.

- 5. Resolve to think twice about the food you choose: Consider both the energy that goes into producing foods and the transportation involved in getting food items to Reading. Many foods are produced locally, some farm vegetables, seafood, dairy products and eggs. Organic foods have less environmental impact in their production than conventionally produced foods, and are considered to be a healthier choice. Vegetables take less energy to produce than meats so besides being healthy, it's a green choice to eat less meat.
- 6. Combine vehicle trips: Instead of running individual errands and returning home after each one, plan your trips to accomplish multiple errands, or even, if possible, in one stop. Once you are at the bank, for example, you can walk to the post office and the drug store in Reading without moving your car. And be sure to turn off the car (idling wastes fuel as well as polluting our air). Perhaps, ask a neighbor if they'd like to come along, or if you can pick up something for them reducing someone else's trips is just as good for the environment as reducing your own!
- 7. Spread the word make a trend of being environmentally conscious. These actions are becoming mainstream, with more people 'reducing' every day!

Best wishes to all of our readers for a very Happy and Healthy New Year!

A column by Reading Climate Committee members Michele Benson, Stephanie Anderberg and Gina Snyder